

# Bitterroot AUDUBON



MAY 2011

NEWSLETTER

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## PRESERVING HABITAT ALONG OUR STREAMS AND RIVERS

By Kay Fulton

The Bitterroot Audubon Society is fortunate to have Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Program Director, as the speaker at our May meeting. She will present a PowerPoint



program on the importance of wetlands and riparian areas and how they can be preserved. Montana's rivers and streams, with their associated riparian habitat, attract more wildlife than any other place in the state. Healthy riparian areas also improve water quality, reduce erosion and flood risks, and enhance a variety of recreational opportunities. Janet will discuss the importance of protecting these critical areas, as well as scientific information available on the size of riparian vegetated buffers needed to protect Montana's water quality, fisheries, wildlife, and wildlife habitat. She will also suggest outreach strategies which can be used to work with landowners and local government officials on riparian area protection.



Since 1989 Janet has coordinated Montana Audubon's legislative and grassroots efforts on behalf of Montana's wildlife and wildlife habitat. She has worked on the protection of wetlands and riparian areas and land use

planning issues for more than 15 years. Under a contract with the Montana Department of

Environmental Quality she provides technical assistance to local governments on these issues and has written several articles on these subjects.

**Come join Bitterroot Audubon on Monday, May 16<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 P.M. at the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge, on Wildfowl Lane north of Stevensville. The public is invited. Come early and view the birds and wetlands of the Refuge.**

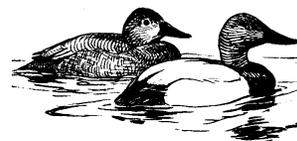
## Welcome Back Waterfowl

By Judy Hoy

Welcome Back Waterfowl Day on April 16, 2011, was a bit cool, but fairly nice between small snow storms. In the Bitterroot Valley, the spring weather changes every half hour. We saw quite a few waterfowl and other birds in their beautiful spring plumage. Male ducks were especially pretty. Five White Pelicans showed up to dazzle novices who had not seen them before. They have the breeding protuberances on the top of their bills so look even more prehistoric than usual.



Many thanks to Kay Fulton for bringing her table and donuts and to Bob Hoy, Jim Story, and Sherry Ritter for helping the people find, name, and enjoy the birds. A special thank you to Bob Danley for all his help and to the Lee Metcalf Refuge for their support each year, helping to make *Welcome Back Waterfowl Day* an enjoyable event for all.



## Letter from the President

By Peter Allen

The amount of knowledge available to us on the internet is simply astounding.



There's way too much for most of us to absorb, so we have to pick carefully lest we be overwhelmed. I turn to Google to find answers to many questions that arise, but sometimes Google offers me information I wasn't even looking for. I recently noticed that their opening screen showed a display of birds, and I wondered why. Helen took one look and asked, "*Is it Audubon's birthday?*" and it was! I didn't know, and I'd never been prodded to find out.

The letters of the internet giant's name are barely recognizable amid the branches and colorful plumes of the birds which adorn the logo, created in the style of the French-American painter and ornithologist's creations.



I thought it was a lovely tribute to honor the 226<sup>th</sup> birthday of John James Audubon, who was born in France April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1785, just four years before the French Revolution. Happy Birthday, Mr. Audubon.

This month I turn over the gavel of office to your next president, confident that this organization will continue its work of protecting the natural world around us and promoting its enjoyment. I appreciate the support I've had from the board and all the members.

## IBA Work Project - Exclosures

Riparian areas and wetlands occupy less than 4% of Montana's land surface, and less than 1% throughout the west, yet they support more than 80% of the bird species in Montana. The integrity of riparian areas is challenged by many forces, including water diversion, establishment of weeds, and browsing pressure from ungulates.



This summer, the Bitterroot River Important Bird Area committee is putting together a few demonstration days to allow the general public to help

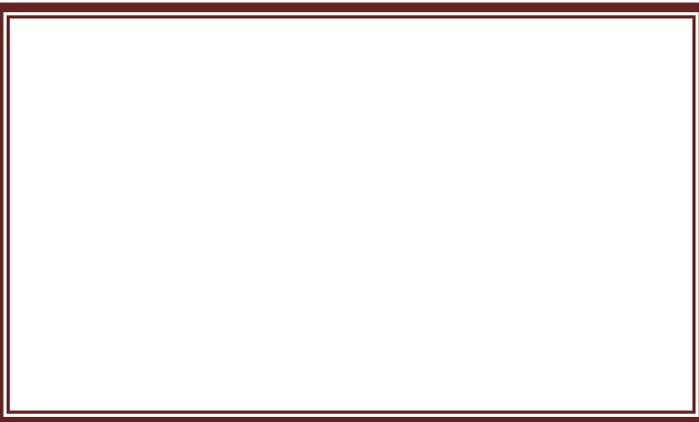
in the construction of ungulate exclosures intended to protect important riparian habitat features. Participants will learn about the components of healthy riparian habitat, observe some of the bird species that depend such habitat, and help in the exclosure construction. If you'd like to be notified of when these events are occurring, please contact Sherry Ritter (777-7409; [s287ritter@mac.com](mailto:s287ritter@mac.com)).

## Election of Officers

Bitterroot Audubon Society's annual meeting will take place as part of our regular chapter meeting on May 16<sup>th</sup>, and will include an election of officers for the year beginning June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011. The president will serve a term of two years; the other officers and board members will serve terms of one year. The board has asked Jim Story and Kay Fulton to prepare a slate of candidates, as set forth below.

Subject to nominations from the floor, the slate of candidates is as follows:

President: Kay Fulton  
VP: Fred Weisbecker  
Secretary: John Ormiston  
Treasurer: Jim Story  
Board members: Sara Ashline, Susie Duff, Karen Griffing, Skip Horner, Judy Hoy, Campbell Massey, Leslie Nyce, Becky Peters, and Kate Stone.



## Carpool to Bird Festival?

One of our members has inquired about sharing a ride to this year's bird festival in Glasgow. It seems very appropriate for a conservation organization to promote efficient travel for such an activity. If you are planning on attending *Wings Across the Big Sky* June 3-5 please let us know and we'll try to coordinate the effort. Email or phone your president (see back page) if interested.

## Owl Prowl – Help Wanted

Are you a night owl? Then maybe you'd like to help in a research project studying the migration of small owls in Montana. Participants help trained technicians in processing any owls caught in mist-nets.

Participants need to be prepared for a long night: project hours run from approximately one hour after sunset to one hour prior to sunrise. Participants need to provide their

own warm-weather gear and a headlamp, and be able to walk short distances at night on uneven terrain. A heated trailer is

used for shelter. Volunteers are needed throughout the month of May. If you are interested in helping with this project, please contact Kate Stone ([kroestone@hotmail.com](mailto:kroestone@hotmail.com); 381-1115) and indicate specific dates you are available and the best way to contact you.



## Staying Vigilant

*By Fred Weisbecker, Conservation Chair*

Many of us have heard from one of our members on her continuing concerns about the possible effects of glyphosate and chlorothalonil on animals and birds. Through the years Judy Hoy, a local wildlife rehabilitator, has been seeing many animals brought to her place with various malformations. It has become her informed opinion that these two chemicals may play an active role in the deformities. Glyphosate is the active ingredient in *Roundup*, a very common herbicide that kills both grasses and broad leaf plants. Chlorothalonil is the chemical agent in many fungicides.

Several recent studies are giving credence to this possibility. A recent scientific study by the National Institute of Environmental Health Studies has shown that frogs are especially sensitive to Chlorothalonil. Deformities were commonly recorded in the test amphibians. It was noted that frogs make excellent test animals in these kinds of studies as they are especially sensitive to environmental and chemical changes. Hopefully more scientific studies will be forthcoming to shed more light on Judy's concerns.

We will always need people like Rachel Carson and Erin Brockovich of the world to ask the tough questions. We may be beyond the days of DDT, creosote, chlordane, strychnine, and many other proven harsh chemicals but we need to remain vigilant to the long term effects of the many chemicals we still use to grow crops, fight bugs, and reduce invasive weeds. We can only hope that agencies like the EPA pay attention to the data and hear the concerns of people like Judy Hoy.

## Bird Surveys Continue in 2011

*By Diane Tipton, Fish, Wildlife & Parks*

Land birds across the state will again be surveyed this spring by staff from the Avian Science Center at the University of Montana and the Montana Natural Heritage Program. The songbird survey began in 2009 with observations on the density and numbers of various bird species and where they occur. "*Knowing the general abundance of birds that live in the state and where they can be found is an important first step in planning future conservation efforts for these species,*" said Catherine Wightman, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' coordinator for the bird monitoring program.

FWP's bird conservation work is aimed at maintaining common bird species and keeping rare or sensitive species from being listed under the Endangered Species Act. Support for songbird monitoring comes from FWP, the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative, and the Intermountain West Joint Venture. The Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory developed the methods and analyzes the annual data.

To learn more about the avian information collected by the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, go to the [rmbo.org](http://rmbo.org) website and visit the RMBO Avian Data Center. Birders can choose a species and select Montana to obtain online maps showing where monitoring occurred in the state for that species and whether birds were located there.

